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AUTHOR Godina, Heriberto
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ABSTRACT

A study described metaphorical writing for engaging Mexican American students in productive emergent literacy activities. During a 2-year qualitative study of a bilingual first-grade classroom, data was collected through an ethnography of communication framework that focused on metaphorical student writing and reading and included interviews and observation. There were about 15 students in the class and each student wrote a number of books that were made available for other students in the class to read. Students regularly discussed the metaphorical interpretations in their writing either through conferencing with the teacher or in round-robin class discussion. The class was clearly successful in its whole language approach, despite the obstacles the instructor faced: finding appropriate Spanish-language texts was not an easy matter; further, many Mexican Americans have been subjected to skill-based instruction, which has left them with negative feelings about education. The instructor overcame this negativity, in part, through establishing an environment that made the students comfortable. He established clear, simple rules, and he provided safe, cozy places in the classroom where students could work alone or in small groups. As a result, the classroom became a comfortable, energetic place. Discussions were facilitated by elevating the student's place, putting them on a platform so they were at a height equal to their teacher. Metaphorical writing was effective because it encouraged authentic representation of student cultural beliefs and a positive motivation toward literacy tasks. (Contains 2 figures and 41 references.) (TB)

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Metaphorical Children's Writing in a Whole-Language Classroom

Heriberto Godina

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

1310 South Sixth Street, MC: 708

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Champaign, IL 61820

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National Reading Conference, New Orleans, LA

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Abstract

This study describes metaphorical writing for engaging Mexican American students in productive emergent literacy activities. During a two-year qualitative study of a bilingual, first-grade classroom, data was collected through an ethnography of communication framework that focused on metaphorical student writing and included interview and observation data. Findings indicate this application of whole-language influenced positive experiences for the literacy development of students who were comfortable with the classroom environment. Metaphorical writing is effective in this setting because it encourages authentic representation of student cultural beliefs and in turn influences a positive motivation toward literacy tasks.

Metaphorical Children's Writing in a Whole-Language Classroom

Metaphorical writing is defined in this context as writing in which students integrate their own drawings and symbols, with or without text, to engage in a meaningful literacy activity. Examples of metaphorical children's writing examined in this study are reflective of their culture and beliefs. The purpose of this paper is to report the value of metaphorical children's writing for engaging first-grade, bilingual students in productive literacy activities. The study uses teacher interviews, field notes, and, of special significance, a collection of student writing to analyze emergent literacy in a bilingual classroom. Metaphorical writing was found to be present in addition to the reading of traditional children's literature, and both were considered to be integral components of one teacher's whole-language philosophy. However, students seemed to show more interest in metaphorical writing. The findings are of importance to researchers interested in bilingual/bicultural emergent literacy development.

We know that the Mexican Americans are the largest ethnic group within the broad category of "Latino" or "Hispanic", and their growing presence is felt in many classrooms across the United States. Wyatt (1992) projects that by the millennium "one-third of all Americans will be non-Anglo" (p. 13), yet educational outcomes for minority groups have been less than favorable. Specifically, in 1989, Latinos made up 2.9 % of all graduates awarded bachelors degrees, a 10% increase, while Whites made up nearly 85 % (Carter & Wilson, 1992, p. 48). Also, Valdivieso & Davis (1988) describe Latinos were three times more likely not to complete high school in comparison to Whites (p. 6) although they represented close to 8% of the total United States population (p. 1). The present educational system is mostly failing Latinos at a ratio that is disproportionate to their social and demographic representation.

However, inter-group differences indicate that eventhough the largest Latino group is Mexican American, Cuban Americans complete both high school and college at a rate comparable to Whites (Valdivieso & Davis, 1988, p. 7). When examined as a whole, Latinos

within the United States share disproportionate school success in comparison to Whites at all levels, yet inter-group differences indicate that a more severe marginalization of the Mexican American student exists. One factor contributing to this differentiation could include that Mexican American students maintain loyalty to their native language (Lopez, 1978) more so than other Spanish-speaking groups, such as young Cuban Americans in Miami, Florida, who gradually begin to prefer English over Spanish (Garcia & Diaz, 1992).

Literacy is a corner stone for succeeding in educational settings that are a gateway for upward social mobility. We also know that linguistic and ethnically diverse students who have internalized an innate sense of colonial subjugation, as opposed to groups who are recent immigrants, experience more obstacles to learning within traditional school settings (Ogbu, 1992). One of the widespread proponents of literacy instruction in the United States is whole language. However, the whole language movement has been criticized for not teaching explicit language skills to linguistically-diverse children (Reyes, 1992; Delpit, 1988), and to students with language difficulties (Liberman & Liberman, 1990; Mather, 1992). Criticisms include that whole language educators do not share their student's cultural, linguistic, and social background, nor their need for explicit literacy instruction vis-á-vis skills, and that this conflicts with the desired outcomes for literacy between stratified cultural groups.

This criticism partially reflects two trends: first, polarized teacher education; whereby, monolingual/White teachers are being credentialized at a rate disproportionate to the ethnically and linguistically diverse students they encounter in the classroom (Garcia, 1986). Second, second-language learners in this country are exposed to more skills-based instruction to help them become proficient in English (McLaughlin, 1985). Educational constraints are also felt by Mexican American students in bilingual education who are situated in a pedagogy where politics usually takes precedence over practical pedagogy (Crawford, 1991), yet learning in the student's primary language is an important step toward their consequential bilingual proficiency. Freeman & Freeman (1993) specify that the production of books by bilingual students in their first-

language is an important strategy for effective literacy learning. Consequently, examining a Chicano teacher's use of student-authored texts in emergent literacy instruction would be relevant for furthering an understanding on what are some of the unique differences related to students of diverse backgrounds.

Methodology

Research context.

This study began while I was visiting a first-grade bilingual, Spanish/English classroom in the Southwest over the course of two years. I was impressed by the number of student-published reading materials that were put out on shelves and passed around between the students. In this classroom, students wrote, either by themselves or as co-authors, an average of ten books a week. There were about 15 students in the class, and each student wrote one book about every one or two weeks. The books reflect various stages of literacy development, and nearly all of the books reflect metaphorical themes. This led me to begin an inquiry as to how the teacher, Carlos Aceves, who is a bilingual Chicano, facilitates the highly-motivated production of children's literature by children, so I met periodically with him to interview and discuss his approach to whole language and to periodically visit the classroom as a participant/observer. Similar to an ethnography of communication framework, data collection focused on communicative acts, events, and situations within a specific Mexican-american speech community (Saville-Troike, 1989).

Data source and analysis

Results to be reported here focus on documented examples of children's writing collected over a period of two school terms (93-94 & 94-95) as well as classroom field notes, photographs, videotape, and teacher interviews representing approximately 40 contact hours. Preliminary results have been shared with the teacher to help contextualize the findings and explain the children's use of metaphorical writing. Follow-up interviews between the teacher and myself

were used to clarify understanding. Students regularly discussed the metaphorical interpretations in their writing either through conferencing with the teacher or in a round-robin class discussion. Although students were not directly interviewed by myself, the teacher did act as an informant who was trusted by his students for confiding information related to their writing and cultural beliefs. In this aspect, the teacher had a dual-role of informant and interviewee. Also, the teacher, the researcher (myself), and the students in this study are all Mexican Americans from the Southwest who also share a unique emic perspective related to literacy.

Metaphorical writing emerged as a salient communicative feature in this classroom and was not an initial focus. All of the writing was placed in a special section of the classroom where it was easily accessible to students. During both years, the popularity of this literacy event grew in momentum with the school term. The few examples of student's writing presented in this study were not selected for being exceptional work, but rather, represent typical classroom products.

It is important to note that focusing on the whole-language aspects of bilingual emergent literacy arose from the perspective of the teacher himself who was an adamant advocate of whole-language. The teacher viewed metaphorical writing as an aspect of whole-language instruction. As researcher, I tried to be conscious of what could be misconstrued as a personal bias in favor of taking sides in the whole-language controversy (McKenna, Stahl, & Reinking, 1994), but I will have to maintain that the whole-language designation described in this paper is an affiliation that was strongly emphasized by the teacher, Carlos Aceves. I feel it is appropriate to convey this teacher's solidarity with whole-language.

What's so significant about this particular classroom?

Some whole-language components are sometimes difficult to implement within the bilingual classroom. Yatvin (1992) describes children's literature as part of the core of a whole-language program. So is the belief that students develop literacy through process-orientations

that are open-ended whereby the students select, or have freedom to choose, which literacy activities are meaningful for them. I will describe how some of these whole-language practices may be obstacles in a Mexican American classroom.

Currently, many trade books are reflecting more cultural diversity, yet they are frequently poor reflections of what is authentic in the Mexican American community, and diversity is frequently portrayed through folklore, stereotype, or deficit perspectives. An authentic representation of Mexican American students could include what Moll (1992) describes as "funds of knowledge", or knowledge acquired through labor, family, and cultural practice (p. 21). Understanding such authenticity demands rigorous cultural observation and reflection on the part of the teacher (Godina, 1992).

Finding suitable Spanish-language texts can also be a difficult task for the teacher, but especially difficult is finding books that acknowledge the Mexican American dialect of Spanish. Dialectical differences are exemplified by Labov's (1982) description of Black English Vernacular and African Americans. Harris (1993) describes several examples of "culturally conscious" African American children's literature whose "writers capture the orality of Black vernacular English without resorting to inaccurate dialect" (p. 178). Such examples of authentic literature are scarce in the Mexican American classroom, partly because of the negative association with Chicano Calo, the most prevalent Mexican American dialect of Spanish. The use of Calo is stigmatized because it shares an underclass affiliation (West, 1988; Reyes, 1988). Perhaps inappropriate for first-grade reading, some outstanding examples of Chicano dialect through an emic perspective of Mexican American culture include Rudolfo Anaya's (1972) Bless Me, Ultima, Cisneros' (1991) House on Mango Street, and the poetry of Carlos Cumpian (1990) in Coyote Sun. Although not intended as a children's book, paintings by artist Carmen Lomas Garza (1991) do celebrate the powerful metaphorical symbolism associated with Mexican culture.

However, even authentic works acknowledging linguistic diversity may be difficult to use within a first-grade classroom. Harris (1993) describes the use of dialect, in reference to a poem by Dunbar (1895), is "difficult reading for children because of the orthographic representation of the dialect" (p. 171). Metaphorical children's writing grasps at differences that are unique to individuals within their own particular speech community and could provide a valuable resource in addition to a comparative reading of trade books. Understanding can be conveyed by children through text or illustration, or both.

Additionally, giving a student freedom of choice may at first be more of an obstacle instead of an opportunity. Most Mexican American students have been exposed to skills-based instruction imposed not only on themselves, but on brothers, sisters, cousins, and even parents who may implicitly convey negative feelings about school. Previous generations endured such educational policies as de facto segregation that kept Mexican American students working in the fields instead of the classroom (San Miguel, 1987), and many remember that the speaking of Spanish in school was a punishable offense. Thus, a Mexican American student may arrive to the classroom with negative expectations toward schooling learned through prior family experiences; as well as, a personal belief that what they have to offer is not relevant in a school setting. This embodies an innate sense of fatalism, or acceptance of failure, for some Mexican American students (Hernandez, 1973). The teacher, Carlos Aceves, describes that Mexican American students being comfortable with open-ended and productive literacy activities is a formidable obstacle.

The school district requires the teaching of certain essential elements representing the criteria that most teachers across the country encounter as standardization of the curriculum becomes routine. In this classroom, the students use the teacher as a resource to complete the district's specific criteria, and students refer to a classroom chart describing their integrated tasks. Students have a lot of latitude and responsibility in the class to select their own activities -- so long as they meet weekly goals/district objectives. Rarely do students fall behind on their

assignments, and they usually finish early and go on to other activities they select. Because of the facilitative nature of the teacher, students are nurtured into responsible and individualistic participation in creative events such as story-writing that are frequently integrated within and in addition to district requirements for first grade. Situating whole-language practice within district guidelines necessitated insightful planning on the part of Carlos, the teacher.

Dealing with the students' innate sense of fatalism was a more complex obstacle. Carlos describes that Mexican American students who feel uncomfortable with open-ended literacy activities is a result of years of subjugation of Mexican Americans. Current examples include the growing anti-immigrant sentiment by political forces through such measures as Proposition 187 in California (De La Torre, 1994), and the English-Only movement (Crawford, 1991). However, the stigmatization of the Mexican American has been a traditional practice among Whites in the United States dating back to 1821 when they first began to encounter Mexicans in Texas (Paredes, 1984). The sense of inadequacy felt by some Mexican American students is instilled through innate fatalism or external racism. Carlos explains:

> Colonization by its very nature socializes the dominated group to have limitations, to place on itself more limitations than the dominant group places on itself, so where as, somebody from the dominant group can be more open-minded, more open to more possibilities, somebody from the dominated group is socialized from the colonial system to have limited expectations, to have limited points of view, not to be open ended, so that if they are placed in a position of having to be more open-ended, then that internalized colonization kicks in and they begin to feel uncomfortable, and you can see it in the case of women, that they have been dominated for so long, that when they are placed in a situation of having an opportunity, of having expectations grow, internally there's an uneasiness, that is characteristic of all colonized people, to feel uneasy with opportunity, to feel uneasy with open expectations, to feel uneasy about thinking as complex, because

> only people from the dominant group are suppose to think in complicated ways, people from the lower group, from the lower classes, from the dominated classes, we're suppose to think in a very limited way. (Aceves, interview, 1994)

Thus, placing the Mexican American student at greater risk for marginalization may include their own sense of fatalistic expectations, and their interpretations of reality that may be out of sync with their teacher. So how would literacy be expected to evolve given these constraints?

One of the important implications of examining whole-language practices within a Mexican American speech community concerns the popular assumption that storybook reading of children's literature be the impetus for effective literacy learning. Despite story-book reading being a prominent feature of emergent literacy among monolingual, middle-class Whites in the United States (García, Pearson, & Jiménez, 1994; Heath, 1983), literacy for bilingual students has been found to emerge in other activities besides conventional storybook reading (García & Godina, 1994). Spanish-language trade books were read and discussed regularly in this classroom, yet the motivation to both read and write stories authored by the students themselves was a highly-valued impetus for productive classroom literacy activities. Students exhibited a preference to their own stories and shared their stories through publication and classroom discussion. The use of the term 'publication', in this context, refers to how students completed a final product that would be displayed, shared, and read in the classroom. These processed-texts were colorfully bound with construction paper and shared a polished form and function. The traditional story book reading session utilizing trade books works in complement to what the students reveal as a valuable literacy activity because of their emphasis on the production of their own stories.

Carlos celebrates the metaphorical aspect of his students' writing. The growing collection of stories, from past and present classes, is a source of pride for both the teacher and the students, and the metaphorical symbolism in the children's writing reveals conceptual themes

that reflect both the children's cultural identity and humanistic interpretations of their evolution within their community, family, and school.

A rationale about why metaphor emerges as important

The teacher couples a common aspect of whole language; whereby, literacy is socially constructed and created by personal expressions of a student's social reality. Where Carlos differs in his whole language philosophy is how *reality* is perceived in the classroom:

> The whole language movement sees children as possessing a different perspective, that they perceive things differently from an adult and that this perception needs to be taken into account, but the premise of that notion is that adults see objective reality, and children see subjective reality, and that the reality of children is as yet 'unattained full reality' because they are at a lower stage of development than people who are older. My contention is that you can classify human development by using stages, but there is also something that needs to be included, the reality at any stage-- that there is objective reality within each stage of development, in other words, there is a real reality. When it comes to children their metaphorical interpretation of reality is also a real reality in that perception, there is a reality that is legitimate, that is as real as the one we perceive, or that a child in a supposedly higher stage of development perceives, and so there is a need to explore that in children and allow children to explore it themselves. (Aceves, interview, 1994)

Towards the end of the year, all students are writing and illustrating stories which invoke a metaphorical interpretation that is also described by Carlos Aceves in "Mythic Pedagogy: An Approach" (1992):

> "A child constructs his reality by extracting parts of an earlier experience in a montage catharsis that eventually produces a new reality. A skunk is seen as a black kitty that has the ability to smell bad." (Aceves, 1992, p. 12).

A student reveals their metaphorical interpretations through text or drawings or a combination of both depending on what features are needed to communicate the story during the classroom discussion. Earlier in the school year, Carlos facilitates student involvement in literacy tasks by writing down the words to a story the student describes and illustrates. Some students decide to do only drawings for their first stories and forego text, some use invented spelling. Later, as the student's confidence grows, and they begin to solicit particular words for their story, or they write/draw their story entirely by themselves without the teacher's help. All stories are shared during discussion time, an important social platform for the students to each read their story. Eventhough the initial stories may have little or no text, they are still shared and discussed during round-robin time.

How does metaphor emerge in this classroom?

At the beginning of the year, Carlos makes sure that the children are comfortable in their environment by allowing them to construct their own learning areas and even their own didactic learning devices. There are a lot of little cubby holes where the children can crawl away from the indirect gaze of adults entering the classroom. Carlos provides basic materials for their construction such as cardboard scrap, glue, fabric, and any other items that are scavenged, just about anything is fair game. Despite the high energy of this student-centered classroom, that would seem to invite havoc, everyone is well-behaved. Classroom rules are kept simple:

1. No one has the right to make me believe any thing I don't want to.
2. No one has the right to touch my body without my permission.
3. Rules one and two apply to everyone.

The course of the day is usually divided between centers-activities and round-robin discussion. Students and teacher maintain a mutual sense of respect and democratic participation. Even during discussion time, when it is normal practice for teachers to lead a discussion, these students are placed upon a stage at a physically higher level than their teacher. In this manner, Carlos, tries to elicit student individuality and participation. Discussions are also conducted in a round-robin format, but emphasize a ceremonial aspect. Carlos later explained that this ceremonial routine was readily accepted by the students because they are already conscious of ceremonial routine in their homes and church through traditional Mexican beliefs related to the Catholic church. However, Carlos implemented the role of ceremony for a discussion, not a religious, purpose.

> We are centered around a candle or a centerpiece, we are in a circle, and we all decorated that stick and its a community stick and it belongs to all of us. All of us put in the same thing, I put in the beads, my string of beads, and they put in their string of beads, and there is a kind of like, equality there. Then when I have the stick, I talk and I express, and when each one has the stick, they talk and they are the owners of the word at that time, once the children get comfortable with this kind of setting, then they start opening up and talking about things that they would not otherwise talk about. If I had stood up there in front of the class and the children sat below me, I would probably not be able to get that kind of response because I would still be the adult, there on top and the children below me, but in the circle setting, children begin to open up about many things, their metaphorical world, their spiritual world, the world that other people don't see, they start talking about invisible friends. (Aceves, interview, 1994).

The classroom is energetic; there is a lot of talking and playing that is fairly normal for young children. The second most active learning center is the music center where the students can listen to different types of music such as contemporary Rock 'n Roll, Native American, Jazz,

Mexican Norteñas, etc. There is also access to blank tapes and musical instruments for the children to record their own music. Some students like to record themselves talking, some mimic a local news broadcast. Students have a lot of freedom to experiment with sound. However, the most popular center is the writing center, where most of the books are constructed and it is located outside of the classroom in the hallway. Carlos explains why:

> My classroom is a very noisy classroom because children are up and about and doing all sorts of things, so I thought that it would help their concentration if they were printing in a quiet place. I also wanted to entice them to go, children like to leave the classroom, it's like a reward for them, so it's a way of enticing them, and also it's a way of not having me there. I guess they are sort free from me at that time, and they just go to it, they are publishing so many books that I run out of paper, they have published twelve books, so far this week alone. (Aceves, interview, 1994).

Cognizance of ancestral culture also plays an important role in the classroom, and it manifests itself in various forms such as an "emotion wheel", or a wheel with a slot in colored sections. The children are encouraged to write down their emotions on slips of paper, whenever they felt it necessary, and to place them into one of the slots of the emotion wheel. The wheel was painted in four different colors, and the children choose and select different colors for different emotions. These scraps of paper are never read in class, and using the emotion wheel was considered to be a private activity. The wheel was located in what use to be a coat closet. The emotion wheel served as a psychological safety valve for children who may be harboring negative feelings about school and home; although, Carlos later described that 'happy' emotions could also be placed there.

Other connections with ancestral culture included the Mesoamerican system of mathematics that served as a template for learning more complex math such as algebra, and the ritualized daily activity of reading the day count with the Aztec Calendar and comparing the day-

count with the current Julian Calendar. An Aztec Calendar has a prominent place in the classroom. During the course of the school term, students developed an understanding of the solstice and equinox, as well as, calculate their birth-date using the Aztec Calendar.

All these elements contribute toward the student's cosmological understanding of their world, and inspires continued curiosity and motivation to learn. The recognition of culture of origin has been found to motivate students to voluntarily select reading materials about cultural topics (Godina, 1994). In this classroom learning acknowledges indigenous Mexican culture, and does not cheer-lead through cultural interpretation with a tourist bus-trip (my metaphor), but systematically evolves through intellectual investigation of cultural elements rich in scientific content, yet traditionally untapped.

A giant heart and an imaginary friend

Through this comfortable and creative classroom setting two students, Ilse and Michelle, wrote about a boy who was trapped inside of a heart. Ilse and Michelle used the heart metaphor because it had a special significance to them. Hearts are used to convey love, and Ilse and Michelle felt as if this boy was being smothered with love (See figure 1).

The boy has a problem, he is perhaps enveloped by too much love, and is physically surrounded by a heart. Outside help is no good; eventhough, outside help is offered, *La niña quiere salbarlo*. Anger is no remedy; eventhough, the Mother joins the other girl and becomes mad when she sees the boy's problem, *la mama vino y ce enojo*. Supernatural forces, which may be part of the cosmological beliefs of the child, are of no help, *la nube no lo puede salbarlo*. Consequently, the boy's problem does not allow him to accomplish the day-to-day tasks of a normal child, such as climbing a swing in the playground, *el niño no puede subir al columpio*. Finally, the boy is sad because he is aware of his problem and the penultimate frame of the story shows him crying, *el niño esta triste porque es un corazon*. The ending of the story is seemingly

anti-climactic because the boy simply saves himself and bursts free from the heart, *el niño ya se salbo.*

Carlos explains that this is a sophisticated transition in the awareness of Ilse and Michelle to describe the boy's ability to resolve *his own problem*. There was nothing else that could have saved him from his fate, other than himself. The boy realizes how other people/forces are incapable of helping him, and he bursts free from his confinement. The boy ends up being the master of his destiny and takes an active role in overcoming his problem. In this manner, Ilse and Michelle cross-over an important boundary in their awareness of their ability as children to shape their world; as well as, their balanced-relationship with other elements within it.

It was through one of the circle-discussions that the children invoked the topic of imaginary friends, and many stories were written on this theme that spiked student interest.

> Imaginary friend was a whole discussion. I didn't set out to talk about imaginary friends, but we have a circle with a talking stick that we do, then we each get the stick and then we talk about whatever we want to talk about, and the topic about invisible friends came and then from there we just took off with it, then once one child admitted about her invisible friend and then another child, and then other children get encouraged. (Aceves, interview, 1994)

Nahelly writes a story about an imaginary friend (see figure 2). Although Nahelly plays with her friend during the day, she invokes her friend during the night -- a time when magical encounters take place. Many of the children's stories about imaginary friends are set at night. This imaginary friend gets run over by a train, yet still continues to visit Nahelly in her dreams. The story reflects a lot of detailed drawing. Carlos believes that the amount of detail a student describes when they are comfortable writing a metaphorical story is indicative of the student's conscious reality that may conflict with adult expectations. Although the topic of death may seem too sensitive for most classroom teachers, Mexican American students are comfortable

discussing the topic of death because death is an integral part of Mexican culture that is celebrated through *El Dia de los Muertos*, or the Day of the Dead -- and ancient celebration whose ceremonial origins date back to Precolumbian Mesoamerica (West, 1988). Death, which is looked upon with aversion by White students/teachers, is traditionally celebrated among many Mexican American communities. Facilitating metaphorical writing by students necessitates acceptance of these nontraditional story grammars, and allowing the students to decide for themselves what is relevant. Students were motivated to describe their invisible friends, and Carlos allowed them the comfort-zone to do so without making opinions about whether or not the stories were appropriate.

Implications for when metaphorical writing is valuable for literacy instruction

This classroom seems to provide a comfortable setting for students to begin to explore language and engage in a writing process with optimal motivation. The teacher believes that students should be encouraged to write in Spanish and English about themes important to themselves, and that this is a more democratic form of pedagogy because student-centered topics are emphasized. The topics discussed in the student's writing frequently reflect beliefs found in the Mexican American speech community to which they belong. Also, student-constructed learning centers create a comfortable classroom setting, and are a key component for nurturing literacy activities. Once comfortable with the open-ended classroom, the teacher facilitates metaphorical narratives by the children through classroom discussion.

The child's use of metaphor plays a powerful role in the child's emergent literacy, yet one of the obstacles for being aware of this seemingly innate ability for children to construct metaphors out of life experience is our own biases as adults who have perhaps grown accustomed to ignore a child's metaphors - and other expressions that come naturally to children. I believe that this could be a critical component from where children from diverse backgrounds

can be taught to be active participants in emergent literacy instruction instead of traditional recipients in a process where there is little value placed on their interpretations of the world.

Metaphorical writing benefits by being facilitated early in the student's school experience so that positive experiences with text, both in reading and writing, allow the student to evolve and grow comfortable, and subsequently fluent, within their perception of literacy. Metaphorical ability can be facilitated through multiple mediums. The only limits for its implementation is the imagination of the child and its validation by the teacher. In Carlos Aceves' classroom, he is adamant about acknowledging his students' reality through their writing. This is a student-centered approach, but however free and open-ended classroom activities are -- eliciting metaphorical ability is a specific strategy by Carlos, who claims that, to some extent, all pedagogy is imposed upon students. Where Carlos differs is in attempting to instill a more democratic form of pedagogy. In this sense, it would be important to remember that what works in one classroom may not work in others because this hinges upon an interdependent relationship that includes nurturing the initiative of the students, the willingness of the teacher to allow students to define their world, and the ability of the teacher to understand their perspective.

In this particular setting, students in the classroom were sensitive to a colonial stigma attached to being Mexican American and not being proficient in English and that this has also served to marginalize them in classroom settings. Overcoming these obstacles is perhaps the most beneficial aspect of metaphorical children's writing through its value for second-language learners who may have difficulties engaging in productive activities in a new language.

Conclusion

Bilingual students are socialized within multidimensional capabilities for understanding and participating in their environment (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992), and they can therefore deploy a variety of productive, authentic, and meaningful literacy experiences. Although there are some examples of how White teachers use whole language among minority students (Crowell, 1991;

Moore, 1991), there is a need for more research describing emic perspectives by whole language practitioners whose ethnic identity reflects the diversity of the present-day United States classroom. I felt that this is was an important impetus for this paper, but I will also maintain that ethnicity alone is not exclusive to good teaching. Nor is ethnicity exclusive to one teacher's sensitive approach to a student's ability to define and celebrate their world through reading and writing. In this sense, Carlos held a dynamic position in the classroom because it is relatively uncommon to find male teachers in a first-grade classroom, much less those who are bilingual and Chicano. When cultural and linguistic ability works in tandem with a transcending vision, obstacles to learning and literacy can be overcome.

Traditionally marginalized students need to be engaged in culturally relevant, open-ended tasks in school instead of narrowly defined, rote, deficit approaches to education. Specific focus needs to be placed upon a teacher's perception of bilingual students as having the ability to transcend traditional barriers and perceptions that in the past have resulted in lowered expectations. Moll (1988) observes that low-level literacy skills normally delegated to non-English speakers is an unfair assessment of their ability to challenge the curriculum. The traditional role of children's literature needs to be examined in conjunction with student writing. Although more research is needed to fully understand the role of metaphor for engaging students in productive literacy activities, this classroom provides some evidence for metaphor being a positive influence.

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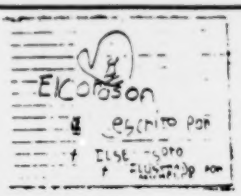
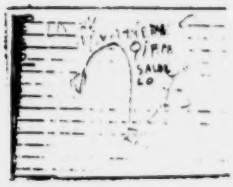
Figure 1. Heart story by Ilse and Michele and English translation.

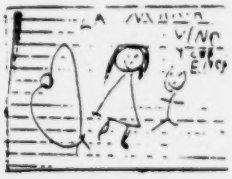


Page one
El Corason escrito por Ilse Soto y Illustrado por Michelle
The Heart written by Ilse Soto and Illustrated by Michelle

Page two
El Niño es un corason
The boy is a heart



Page three
La niña quiere salbarlo
The girl wants to save him

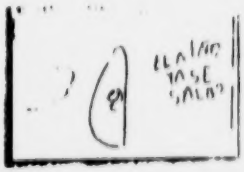


Page four
La mama vino y se enoja
The mother arrived and became angry

Page five
La nube no lo puede salbarlo
The cloud cannot save him

Page six
El niño no puede subir al columpio
The boy cannot climb on the swings

Page seven
El niño esta triste porque es un corazon
The boy is sad because he is a heart



Page eight
El niño ya se salbo
The boy now is saved

Page nine
Fin Fin
End End

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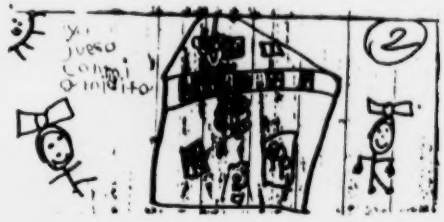
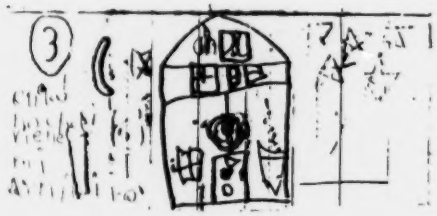
Figure 2. Invisible friend story by Nahelly and English translation.

Page one
En la noche viene mi amigita
At night my little friend comes

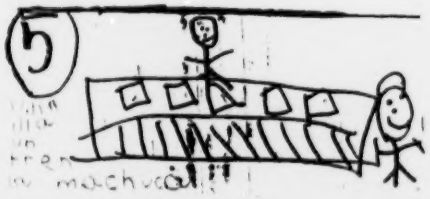


Page two
Yo juego con mi amigita
I play with my little friend

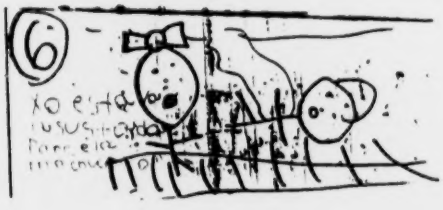


Page three
En la noche viene mi amigita
At night my little friend comes

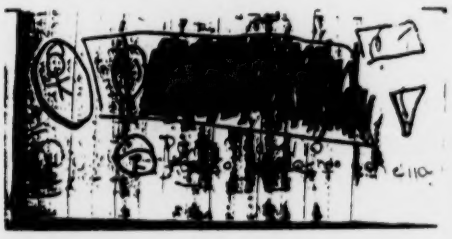
Page four
En el dia you juego con mi amigita
In the day I play with my little friend



Page five
Un dia un tren la machuca
One day a train ran over her



Page six
Yo estaba asustada por que la machuco
I was scared because it ran over her



Page seven
Pero todavia sigo soñando con ella
But I still dream about her

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